

ASOTIN County Conservation District

Mission Statement:

"To advocate, educate and assist people in responsible land management and agricultural practices that conserve and improve air, soil and water quality and fish and wildlife habitat for present and future generations."

January 20, 2006

To: John Larson, WACD Executive Director
Fred Colvin, WACD President
Mark Clark, WSCC Executive Director
Jim Peters, WSCC Chair

The Asotin County Conservation District is writing this letter to express concerns we have regarding the WACD committees and how implementation of the committees' work has evolved.

When the committees first formed, both WACD and WSCC gave members assurances that recommendations from committees would be taken seriously. It was understood at that time that a recommendation from the committee was just that – a recommendation and that the Commission (members) would make the final decision, especially on funding issues. This process has worked well until recently.

Recently a district has received criticism from other districts because of the amount of money they received from programs and they are participating on the committees that made the funding recommendations. Because of the pressure they are feeling, the Commission has responded by changing the process for committee participation in funding decisions. Now the committee will make a recommendation to WSCC staff. WSCC staff will review the recommendations, make changes they feel are necessary and send out the recommendation to all districts for review and comment. They will then incorporate those comments and present the recommendation in final form to the Commission. The problem is that the committee doesn't have an opportunity to review the comments before the recommendation goes to the Commission for action. In the case of the recent livestock grant technical assistance distribution, the comments made by other districts changed the scope of the initial recommendation and could possibly exclude districts from critical funding needed for districts to assist landowners with identified water quality issues.

We would like to make some suggestions for the continued success of the WACD committees.

1. Committee review of final recommendation

At this point, we'd like to clarify that we feel that a statewide review of any committee recommendation is essential. This review provides the necessary checks, balances and inputs from those that are affected by the recommendation. However, we feel strongly that the committee should have final review of all recommendations before they go to the Commission. Committee members have dedicated a great deal of time and energy to

strong commitment to developing a successful statewide program. They have participated many hours in committee activities and understand the history of decisions and the limitations of the programs. Their efforts should be respected by providing them final review of recommendations to ensure it is still in the spirit of the program.

2. Access to all WACD committee decisions

At the 2004 WACD annual meeting, Asotin County Conservation District presented resolution #2004-031 – Improved Communications with Districts suggesting that the minutes, agendas, meeting notices and recommendations for all committees be available to all districts in the state for review. This resolution passed. As noted above, we feel that this review is necessary for a successful statewide program. While the best scenario would be for every district to have a representative on every committee that impacts their district, this is nearly impossible. However, a handful of people on a committee should not be making policy or position statements for the entire state without review. We suggest that WACD work with the committee chairs to get information out to all districts for review and comment. Inviting districts to be members is just not enough.

3. Background information

We suggest that committees provide background information to districts along with the recommendation. This may help to educate reviewers about the challenges and limitations faced by the committee when making the recommendation. This may also cut down on some of the criticism committees receive about their recommendations and take the pressure off individual districts.

4. Set deadlines for receiving comments

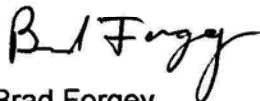
Most committee recommendations have a time frame, usually short. Districts not participating on the committee but willing to provide input also need to respect the work of the committee and provide comments by the deadline.

5. Respect of committee decisions

As stated earlier, committees put out a great deal of time and effort to make a recommendation. There are many factors that influence a decision that non-committee members may not understand. If there are questions or concerns about a decision, they should be referred to the committee and not the Commission members or staff. If Commission members and staff are not participating on the committee, they won't have the knowledge to answer concerns. This puts them in a difficult position and disregards the work of the committee.

We hope that you understand that this letter is written with the highest respect for the work WSCC and WACD does. Our goal here is for continued success. If you would like to discuss any items in this letter, contact Cheryl Sonnen at 509-758-8012 and she will be happy to discuss them with you.

Respectfully submitted,



Brad Forgey
Chair



STATE OF WASHINGTON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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February 15, 2006

Mr. Brad Forgey, Chair
Asotin Conservation District
PO Box 128
Anatone, Washington 99101

RE: WACD Committees Concerns

Dear Mr. Forgey:

We apologize for the delay in our response to your letter we received on January 30, 2006 regarding your concerns with the WACD committees and how implementation of the committee's work has evolved. We appreciate your concerns and your time in writing to us as well as providing suggestions on making the process better.

WACD will be reviewing your concerns at their Officer and Director's meeting this week. I will be discussing WACD responses, as well as my own, with Lynn Brown and Bill Boyum in order to develop a proposal for the March Commission meeting.

A proposal will be then be brought forward to the March Commission meeting. I will send you the proposal prior to the Commission meeting.

Again, thank you for expressing your concerns and recommendations

Sincerely,

Mark A. Clark
Executive Director

cc: Megan Stewart, District Manager, Asotin CD
John Larson, WACD
Fred Colvin, WACD
Commission Members
Bill Broughton, Regional Manager